



HB 583 – Climate Solutions Now Act – SUPPORT

Dear Chairmen Brave and Davis, and Members of the House ENT and ECM Committees:

Blue Water Baltimore is the watershed-based nonprofit focused on improving water quality and community resilience within Baltimore City and Baltimore County, and home to the Baltimore Harbor Waterkeeper. **We request your support of HB 583 – Climate Solutions Now.**

The Mid-Atlantic region is already experiencing the impacts of changing climate. In 2017, Blue Water Baltimore worked with researchers at the US Geological Survey and the Cary Institute of Ecosystems Studies to evaluate 20 years of data in the Gwynns Falls watershed in Baltimore County and City. This evaluation showed that rainfall has demonstrably increased and has impacted the health of this watershed.¹ The Baltimore region is increasingly experiencing “flashy” storm events that lead to local flooding, property damage, and in Baltimore City, the discharge of untreated sewage into homes and businesses due to old, leaky infrastructure.

Many communities in Baltimore are also subjected to increasing summer temperatures, called the “urban heat island” effect, because extensive pavement and few trees exacerbate heat. In 2018, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) measured summer temperatures across City neighborhoods at the same times in different locations and found that summer temperatures on a single day could be as much as 16° hotter in neighborhoods with fewer trees and more impervious cover². Many of these neighborhoods have higher populations of Black residents, higher rates of poverty, and higher incidences of poor health outcomes including respiratory ailments like asthma.

House Bill 583 would help reverse these disturbing trends by:

- 1) Committing the state to aggressive, but necessary, reductions in greenhouse gas emissions that trap heat and pollutants in our cities and towns,
- 2) Mandating that a percentage of all future climate spending go to communities already overburdened by the impacts of climate change, like urban heat and flooding, and
- 3) Prioritizing climate mitigation efforts including the planting of some 5 million trees, with a minimum target for trees in our most impacted urban neighborhoods.

Why are Trees so important? Where will they go?

Baltimore City has about 2.8 million trees, covering roughly 27% of our neighborhoods, parks, and developed lands. According to Tree Baltimore, a citywide partnership between our BCRP Forestry Division, US Forest Service, and local nonprofits, these trees provide critical economic, environmental, and public health benefits to residents, including:

- **\$3.3M /yr in energy savings** by shading buildings from summer sun and blocking winter winds,
- **\$10.7M /yr storing 527 tons of carbon**, the harmful gas that fuels the greenhouse effect,
- **\$3.8M /yr removing 700 metric tons of air pollution**, including CO and NOx, and
- **\$1.6 M /yr removing 244 metric tons of ground-level ozone**, the main ingredient in smog and leading contributor to asthma.

¹ Factors affecting long-term trends in surface-water quality in the Gwynns Falls watershed, Baltimore City and County, Maryland, 1998–2016. <https://pubs.er.usgs.gov/publication/ofr20181038>

² <https://www.noaa.gov/news/hot-days-in-city-it-s-all-about-location>

While 2.8 million trees may seem like a lot, it is **1.3 - 1.5 million trees short of Baltimore City's goal of 40% tree canopy** by 2030. Tree Baltimore and academic partners have mapped and prioritized the neighborhoods where tree canopy is lowest and opportunities for planting are highest. These partners also track at the neighborhood scale, changes in tree canopy over time, so that we have a dynamic picture of where trees can be planted. And finally, nonprofit organizations, including Blue Water Baltimore and the Baltimore Tree Trust, actively work with BCRP Forestry and neighborhood leaders across the region to ensure that residents understand the value and benefits of trees, including lower summer temperatures, higher home values, reduced stormwater, and improved respiratory outcomes. We work in partnership with communities to plan for, plant, and maintain trees every year.

The time for action on climate is NOW; the costs of doing nothing are already too high for many communities to bear. **As such, Blue Water Baltimore, on behalf of our thousands of members and supporters, respectfully urges a Favorable Report on HB 583.** Thank you.

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